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ABSTRACT

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Suzanne M. Wilson

National
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A CASE CONCERNING CONTENT: USING CASE STUDIES TO TEACH SUBJECT MATTER

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Abstract

Several scholars in the field of teacher education recently have proposed the use of cases as a pedagogical strategy in teacher education. In this paper, Wilson discusses her preliminary attempts at using a case to teach prospective teachers about the role that subject matter knowledge plays in pedagogical thinking. The author begins the paper by establishing the intellectual and practical contexts of the case by discussing both current research in the field of subject matter knowledge in teaching and the teacher education course which she teaches. Wilson then presents a case of a new teacher whose subject matter knowledge was not sufficient for his instructional purposes and plans. The paper ends with a set of questions that the author has developed to use in conjunction with the case in teacher education courses. In sum, the paper is a case of using a case, a story told by a teacher educator about how she has used one particular case in teaching prospective teachers.

A CASE CONCERNING CONTENT: USING CASE STUDIES TO TEACH SUBJECT MATTER[1]

Suzanne M. Wilson[2]

Subject matter knowledge is experiencing a renaissance in two arenas of thought associated with teaching and teacher education: policy and research. Current reform movements in states like New Jersey and Connecticut have instituted alternate routes into the teaching profession, for example, whereby individuals with undergraduate degrees simply participate in brief training programs that focus on generic pedagogical skills in order to obtain their initial certification. Still other states like Florida and Illinois are changing the requirements for teacher education programs, placing a heavier emphasis on subject matter studies rather than on more generic professional studies. Still other reform movements in teaching, like those stimulated by the Holmes (Holmes Group, 1986) and Carnegie (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986) reports, emphasize the pivotal role of subject matter knowledge in teaching, although the authors of these reports also caution us to consider the ways in which knowledge of content interacts with knowledge of pedagogy.

Concurrently, recent research affirms the centrality of subject matter knowledge in teaching, highlighting that the contribution it makes is in its interaction with knowledge and beliefs about learners, learning, and pedagogy. Some scholars, among them Shulman (1986), propose that there exists a body of knowledge, unique and essential to teaching, that is a subject-specific pedagogical knowledge. This knowledge, sometimes called pedagogical content knowledge, consists of understandings and beliefs about the range of alternatives for teaching a particular piece of subject matter to particular students in particular schools, as well as knowledge and beliefs about the ways in which students learn the content in question. This knowledge also enables teachers to generate instructional representations that are justifiable on the basis of the discipline itself, on theories of teaching and learning, on knowledge of the interests and prior knowledge of students, and on educational goals and objectives.

Thus, on at least one level, policymakers, teacher educators, and researchers now agree with philosophers who have long pointed to subject matter as the essential ingredient in teacher knowledge. While consensus among these different populations is heartening on some levels, teacher educators are left with the responsibility of finding ways to ensure that teachers graduate from their programs--whether those programs are four year undergraduate,

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[1]This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in San Francisco, March 1989.

[2]Suzanne Wilson, assistant professor of teacher education at Michigan State University, is a senior researcher with the National Center for Research on Teacher Education.

fifth-year credential, or alternative routes--with sufficient subject matter knowledge and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge to begin a career in teaching.

This is no simple feat. More courses in content will not ensure the kinds of subject matter expertise that researchers like Leinhardt and her colleagues (Leinhardt and Greeno, 1986; Leinhardt and Smith, 1985), Shulman and his associates (Grossman, 1988; Grossman, Wilson, and Shulman, 1989; Shulman 1986, 1987a, 1987b; Wilson, 1988b; Wilson, Shulman, and Richert, 1987; Wilson and Wineburg, 1988; Wineburg and Wilson, 1988, in press), or researchers at the National Center for Research on Teacher Education (Ball, 1988a; Ball and McDiarmid, in press; McDiarmid, Ball, and Anderson, 1989) call for. Neither will a heavier emphasis on conventional methods courses fit the bill. Rather, the kinds of subject matter knowledge for teaching that these researchers recommend require that we use new methods, introduce new content, and even perhaps create new courses in our programs.

As a researcher of subject matter knowledge and a teacher educator, I feel a particular commitment to exploring and developing new ways of teaching teachers to learn about subject matter. While the development of new courses that focus on subject matter knowledge in the context of teaching is one promising area of development, another is the development of cases that focus on issues of content and can be used in preexisting teacher education courses. Teacher educators could use such cases to engage in discussions with their students about what it means to know the subject matter, how teachers make decisions about what to teach students, and how best to represent the subject matter to students in ways that will facilitate their developing understandings, all the while relating those discussions to the theoretical and practical issues that are raised and covered in courses on curriculum, instruction, or foundations.

In this paper I present and discuss a case that I developed for just that purpose. I begin with a discussion of the development of the case. The case is then presented in conjunction with a series of questions that might be used to discuss the case. I conclude with a warning about a number of issues we must consider as we begin to explore and experiment with the possible uses of cases in teacher education.

The Development of the Case

The case I present in this paper is one that has been adapted from a longer case study written for the Knowledge Growth in a Profession Project at Stanford University. The Knowledge Growth in a Profession Project was a two-year study that involved interviews and observations with a group of novice teachers in California (see Shulman and Grossman, 1987 for a summary of this project). The central aim of this research was to explore the ways in which the subject matter knowledge of new teachers is influenced by and influences the process of learning to teach. During the first year of the research we worked with 20 teachers who were participating in fifth-year teacher education programs in the San

Francisco Bay area. During the second year of the study we followed 12 of those teachers into their first year of full-time teaching, continuing to observe and interview them as they learned to teach.

As part of the pilot work we conducted for this project, I worked with several teachers, one of whom is the focus of this case. I met George in January of 1984 when he was halfway through a fifth-year teacher education program at a private, research university in the San Francisco Bay area. During the first year of our collaboration, I interviewed him six times. The topics of those interviews included conversations about the courses he had taken as an undergraduate, the courses and experiences that constituted his teacher training, and his experiences student teaching. During the second year we worked together, when George was in his first year of full-time teaching, I interviewed him another six times. These interviews focused on his experiences teaching--what he planned to do in his classes, reflections on what had happened in his classes, and the lessons he felt he was learning about teaching. All of these interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

Throughout my association with George, I also observed his teaching--9 times as a student teacher, 10 times as a first year teacher. In addition to the field notes that I wrote based on these observations, George kept a journal throughout the project. Writing in it sporadically, he used this journal primarily as a way of keeping track of ideas, experiences, and feelings that he believed I would be interested in. During subsequent interviews, we would frequently discuss one or two of the ideas, events, or issues that he had raised in this journal.

Using the interview transcripts, my field notes, and George's journal entries, I wrote a report about George's learning to teach (a complete description of the methodology I employed in data collection and analysis are available in Wilson, 1988a). The case that I present below was adapted from that longer, more comprehensive technical report. I began developing the case when I was working with a colleague on a research project in which we asked preservice teachers to write cases of their own experiences as a method of teacher education (LaBoskey, 1989; LaBoskey and Wilson, 1987). In an attempt to help the teachers in this research project understand what a case might look like, I drew selections from my analysis of George as an example. My purpose for using the case was illustrative; that is, I wanted the teachers to see how I had used data to develop a case of a teacher. In this way, I hoped to facilitate the development of their own cases.

A year later, I began teaching a course entitled, "Exploring Teaching" in the College of Education at Michigan State University. The Teacher Education 101 course is designed to help students interested in teaching explore the complexity of teaching, learning, and the relationships between them (cf., Feiman-Nemser, McDiarmid, Melnick, and Parker, in press; and Ball, 1988b for further description and discussion of the course). Throughout the class, students examine their beliefs about teaching and learning as they are presented with three

questions: What does it mean to teach? How do the social, political, historical contexts of schooling influence teaching and learning? What do teachers need to know in order to teach?

For the section of the course that focuses on questions about what teachers need to know, my goals include helping students understand the centrality of subject matter knowledge in teaching. Most undergraduates who take the class assume that the most important things they need to know to teach involve classroom management, discipline, or lesson planning. They, like many others, presume the development of sufficient subject matter knowledge will happen as a matter of course and is not, therefore, central to their professional preparation. To help them examine this belief, I engage them in several projects that are designed to help them confront their own subject matter knowledge (or lack thereof). In addition, I use cases of other student teachers learning to teach as occasions to explore these issues.

One such case is that of George, the case that I had begun developing at Stanford University. I use it in the class after students have read several articles on subject matter knowledge and teaching (Shulman, 1986; Wilson, Shulman, and Richert, 1987) in order to explore, in the concrete, some of the theoretical issues that are presented in those articles, for example, pedagogical content knowledge and representations of knowledge. In the next section, I discuss some of these issues as they relate to the case of George. Readers unfamiliar with the research on teachers' subject matter knowledge, however, may wish to read those pieces prior to interpreting or using the case that follows.

The Purposes of the Case

Research on teachers' subject matter knowledge, and the role that it has played in teaching, is predicated on the notion that knowing something and knowing how to teach that something involve two very different types of understanding. No one would deny that subject matter knowledge is a necessary prerequisite for teachers: Teachers who do not know their subject matter run the risk of misrepresenting the content of instruction to their students. But recent research suggests that the assumption that subject matter training is sufficient preparation for teaching is erroneous and, indeed, can be harmful. The idea has intuitive appeal. We have all met a teacher, a friend, a mentor, a colleague who was informed and knowledgeable about a particular topic but incapable of explaining it or teaching it. Teaching history well requires more than a knowledge of the subject matter that can be acquired through formal study of history, either as a student in history classes or as an avid reader of historical works.

Recent research also suggests that the ability to communicate one's understanding is not simply a matter of mastering a few generic principles of teaching and learning that can be overlaid like templates on a particular subject matter. Teaching laboratory science is

different from teaching creative writing; teaching Shakespeare is different from teaching the Constitution. The ability to do something with the content of instruction depends, among other things, on a sensitivity to the interaction of pedagogy and content: an understanding of the ways in which the nature of the subject matter shapes the nature of the pedagogy, and vice versa.

In our research we have found that the experiences of novice teachers influence the development of their subject matter knowledge in several ways. Not surprisingly, one type of change we observed was additive--teachers learned more about topics that they were required to teach. For example, several of the mathematics teachers we worked with had not taken a geometry class since they were high school students. Yet they were assigned to teach it during their first few years of teaching. Preparing for class, teaching students, and then talking with us about the instruction provided a powerful learning experience for those novice teachers.

While learning to teach, novice teachers learn more about the content than additional names, events, concepts, short stories, equations, however. They also learn about examples, metaphors, analogies, and illustrations to aid in the communication of subject matter knowledge from teacher to student. As witnesses to their deliberations, we observed teachers transform the content, producing representations of the subject matter that they intended to present to the students, a process that involves translating the subject matter for the purposes of teaching it. The representations that teachers generate vary from teacher to teacher, content to content, class to class. I use an example drawn from our pilot work done for the Knowledge Growth in a Profession Project to illustrate, for now, one possible image of a representation (this example is taken from Wilson, Shulman, and Richert, 1987).

Alan, a teacher we worked with for one year while he was completing a fifth-year teacher education program, was teaching two classes of freshman English as part of the internship required for credentialing in the state of California. The English department in his school required that he teach *Julius Caesar* to his ninth graders in the spring, approximately two months before the end of the academic year. Concerned about their interest in Shakespeare ("I don't want them to be afraid of Shakespeare for the rest of their lives"), their ability to comprehend the prose, and the effects of the spring weather on their motivation, Alan decided to foreshadow the play by engaging his students in a prewriting activity. He recalled:

> *Julius Caesar* is basically a play about internal conflicts, a moral decision for which there is really no wrong or right answer. If we kill this man, we might save our republic but we endanger ourselves. If we don't kill him, we could be endangered. One man's struggle with a moral decision, the consequences of his actions and how people turn against him. And so what I had them do was . . . I gave them an artificial scenario. I said, "You are the first officer on

> the Starship Enterprise. Captain Kirk has been getting out of hand. He's a good captain, he's been made Commander of the Fleet. But you, as his closest friend, and your fellow officers, have been noticing that he's been getting risky, a little big-headed. You're afraid that he's going to endanger the Federation Fleet and might just seek glory in some farcical campaign." (Wilson, Shulman, and Richert, 1987, p. 112)

Alan designed this activity with several things in mind. Concerned that 15-year-old boys would be interested in something other than Julius Caesar on sunny May afternoons in California, he wanted an activity that would grab, and hold, their attention. Knowing that a central theme in *Julius Caesar* involves internal conflicts, he searched for a way to facilitate the development of a similar understanding in his students. Finally, he wanted an activity that would engage them in the ideas for he believed that adolescents have trouble discussing and reflecting on such conflict realistically and thoughtfully. He went on to reflect on how the students reacted to the lesson:

> And they really took off on that. . . . They said they found out that there really wasn't a right answer. They argued back and forth. You couldn't just kill him. If you kill him, it's your head on the chopping block, too. And you also have a moral obligation to your country and you can't let him go on behaving this way. What they finally came up with was that it's a pretty tough decision to make.

Alan used this activity to foreshadow the sequence of lessons he taught about *Julius Caesar*. In the class following this activity, Alan discussed the ways in which Captain Kirk and Julius Caesar were similar and different. On subsequent days, the class read the play out loud; these readings were interspersed with mini-lectures about relevant historical information. In addition, Alan discussed several themes with his students, including moral conflict, and had the class act out selected portions of the play.

The example of Alan teaching Shakespeare highlights several issues central to our research. First, the transformation of subject matter into classroom instruction is influenced by a host of factors. Alan's transformation of *Caesar* depended on his knowledge of the pedagogy, in particular, his knowledge that one effective strategy for teaching the strange to students is to tie it to the familiar. But in generating this transformation, Alan drew on other types of knowledge, knowledge that is distinct from knowledge of pedagogy. He drew on his knowledge of Shakespeare and of *Julius Caesar*; he also drew on his knowledge of students--what they care about and what they know. Although this is an incomplete and oversimplified characterization of the knowledge, beliefs, dispositions, and values that contributed to Alan's decision to use this activity, the example provides a flavor of how different types of knowledge and skill interact and contribute to a teaching episode.

A second issue that the example raises is the fact that any representation a teacher selects or creates will be incomplete. Watching Alan's class, I was convinced that his students were involved, alert, and interested during the lessons I observed; the majority of the students had their eyes on Alan, were sitting straight in their chairs, and participating in the ensuing discussions and activities. But I did not collect data about student understanding. I have no way of ascertaining what students were learning about Shakespeare and this play. We would hope that they were learning, among other things, about the characters, the themes, the plot, the history of Rome, and Shakespearean literature. But it is possible that what these students "learned" through this activity was that the Roman Empire and the Starship Enterprise are synonymous. While in his subsequent explanations and activities Alan attempted to expose students to issues that went far beyond the analogy he used to introduce the unit, there is the chance that he only succeeded in teaching his students that Captain Kirk is a latter day version of Julius Caesar. Moreover, he introduced new themes in the play, telling students that *Julius Caesar* was a work about much more than internal conflict.

Our analysis of representations such as this one has led us to conclude that teaching requires many types of knowledge--knowledge of content and learners and learning and curriculum and context--and skill--skills of planning and discussing and lecturing and managing and reflecting. This is not new news; many researchers have acknowledged and studied these types of knowledge and skill before us. But we have also found that teachers possess a knowledge that has not been discussed previously, a knowledge that is produced by the interaction of pedagogy and content, *pedagogical content knowledge*. Shulman (1986) describes this subject-specific pedagogical knowledge:

> A second kind of content knowledge is pedagogical knowledge, which goes beyond knowledge of the subject matter per se to the dimension of subject matter knowledge *for teaching*. I still speak of content knowledge here, but of the particular form of content knowledge that embodies the aspects of content most germane to its teachability.
>
> Within the category of pedagogical content knowledge I include, for the most regularly taught topics in one's subject area, the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations--in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others.
>
> Pedagogical content knowledge also includes an understanding of what makes the learning of specific topics easy or difficult: the conceptions and preconceptions that students of different ages and backgrounds bring with them to the learning of those most frequently taught topics and lessons. If those preconceptions are misconceptions, which they so often are, teachers need knowledge of the strategies most likely to be fruitful in reorganizing the understanding of learners, because those learners are unlikely to appear before them as blank slates. (pp. 9-10)

Thus, the representations that we have observed novice teachers generate become part of their growing pedagogical content knowledge. But pedagogical content knowledge is not simply a bag of tricks, a repertoire of representations that combine pedagogy with content in ways that are sensitive to learners and school contexts. Pedagogical content knowledge also involves a way of thinking, of reasoning through and solving problems. This process usually involves the generation of or evaluation of alternative representations of the subject matter. Called "pedagogical reasoning" (Ball, 1988a; Wilson, 1988b), this more dynamic dimension of pedagogical content knowledge accounts for the ways in which teachers think through how to present the subject matter to their students, what "hooks" to use, what prior knowledge to capitalize on, what points to make.

I developed the case of George to stimulate discussions about how and why teachers select the representations of subject matter they do, the problems inherent in representations (e.g., the fact that each representation, like any metaphor or analogy, has soft spots where the content is oversimplified or misrepresented), and the differences between subject matter knowledge and subject matter knowledge for teaching. The case begins with a description of George's educational background, the reasons he decided to teach, and his experiences learning to teach writing and literature. This information is provided in order to help the reader analyze the heart of the case which is the final section, entitled "Teaching theme."

The Case:
George, a Beginning English Teacher

There is no pithy way to characterize George. He's a kid from Nevada who has dreams of becoming a novelist. He listens to Beethoven, Mozart, and Dan Fogelberg when he's driving around in his red pickup truck. He's a baseball player who loves to read Shakespeare and Kundera, Faulkner and O'Connor. He wants to be a minister some day but for now, he'd really rather teach English. Like all of us, George is many different people--a writer, a cowboy, a first baseman, a teacher, an avid reader, a man in his early 20s. For the two years we worked together, I saw many of George's passions, dispositions, interests, values, and understandings influence the teacher he became. In this case I focus on his academic training and his experiences learning to teach literature.

A Brief Intellectual Biography

George presents a compact figure--five feet nine inches tall, he is strong and muscular. When he talks to you, you are captivated by a pair of mischievous and intense brown eyes. He grew up in a small town in Nevada, reading avidly, riding horses, driving pickup trucks. He left Nevada in 1980 to attend Pine University, a prestigious private research university in northern California. Receiving a B.A. with distinction in English in 1984, he specialized in creative writing; however, his transcript is replete with courses in literature, humanities, languages, and religious thought, in addition to extensive course work in fiction writing. George spent minimal time taking classes outside of the humanities: Of the 178 academic units that comprise his formal undergraduate education, 124 were in the aforementioned areas.

When asked about his undergraduate education, George focused on his development as a writer of prose and critical literary analysis. He characterized his education as the acquisition of skills he would need to develop into a writer:

> Mostly I wanted to write myself. That really was on my mind a lot when I was taking classes. To see things like why a writer is presenting things in the way he or she is, what prompts him or her to write, and mostly, I think, why or how the historic tradition behind the writer has influenced the way that he or she writes.

Three types of academic experiences influenced George's development as a writer: courses that traced the development of an author or a literary genre, classes that provided an opportunity for George to write either fictional or critical pieces, and courses in which the professor used particular analytic frameworks to critique fiction.

George enjoyed courses that traced the development of authors because he could begin to understand how authors' personal interests, as well as the historical, social, and cultural contexts in which authors work and live, influence their writing. Describing a seminar on Forester, he explained:

> It was a chance to delve into the complete range of one author's work. It wasn't just a single expression, you could see patterns in his own thought developing throughout the books. You see patterns and changes and progress of thought because we did read them in the order they were written. He's a very interesting writer philosophically speaking. He toyed with a lot of Western and Eastern religions. You could really see that what he is studying at the moment really comes out in the novel that he is writing at that time. So you can see his interests bounce off one another and influence the progress of his thought.

A course that traced the development of the short story provided a similar experience:

> This was another great class--the development of the short story. It was great for about two or three reasons. One is that we read a little bit about a lot of great authors. I read a lot of people I hadn't read before--19th century Poe, Turgenev--through very contemporary writers--O'Connor. . . . It was good because it was a broad survey so you got a taste of a lot of authors. But the reason that it was good was that . . . it traced the development of what the very specific short story genre was. And that fit very well in with that fiction writing class that I was taking at the time and the one that I had taken before. I felt that I had a headstart and it really did flesh out a lot of the structures that were in my mind.

The experience of writing papers had a tremendous influence on George throughout his undergraduate education. In one interview he was asked to identify and discuss the classes that he felt had the greatest impact on him as a student. Among the 10 classes that he discussed, 6 of those experiences involved writing major papers--2 others were fiction writing classes that involved writing short fictional pieces for discussion in seminars. The experience of writing papers and prose contributed to his intellectual growth in two

ways--not only did the practice of writing fiction in seminars contribute to his development as a writer, his exposure to the "craft side" of literature also contributed to his ability to analyze critically the work of other authors:

> I guess the fiction writing class had a fair amount of influence on me too. It was the first time that I had seen English from the other side, from the craft side of it. And that would influence my critical thinking of fiction from then on because I saw it from that side--specifically from things like craft development, the author's choice of language--the true language of the author and the language he was using.

The third type of academic experience that influenced George's development as a writer and critic was exposure to how professors used psychological, sociological, political, and philosophical frameworks to analyze fiction. His comments about a course on women's fiction reflect the value he placed on these experiences:

> This was a really good class, one that stands out in my mind. . . . It was women writers, 19th century women writers. We read *Frankenstein*, the Bronte sisters, *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Middlemarch*, Eliot, Virginia Woolf. . . . It was good for a lot of reasons . . . I saw a definite critical stance being taken toward the works being studied. Not necessarily a generic analysis of the text. The professor did a lot of feminist literary criticism, and she forced me to think in that mode. It was a fun class. There were good books. She did some Freudian analysis which a lot of people think is pretty old hat but, regardless of that fact, it was good to see the exercise of applying a very specific critical stance to a specific book.

Within the realm of literature, George was intrigued with the work of modern authors. He planned his course work in college so that he could meet the requirements of his major during his first three years, reserving his senior year for intensive study of modern art and literature. He valued the English classes he took prior to his senior year because he believed that they provided him with the background knowledge of literature and skills of critical writing that he needed to pursue his personal interests in modern art and fiction. Summarizing his undergraduate career, George said:

> If you break it down, the vast majority of my classes are reading and English from the 18th century to the present. Renaissance literature, the history of language, Chaucer. I really tried to get those out of the way. I really wanted to get to the modern stuff, mostly because I wanted to write myself. That was really on my mind a lot when I was taking those classes. To see things like why a writer is presenting things in the way that he or she is. What prompts him or her to write. Mostly, I think, why and how the historic tradition behind the writer has influenced the way that he or she writes. In other words, why do Dickens and Eliot write these really moralistic novels in which real morals and real philosophical issues are dealt with? Why are they writing those novels and why are the newest authors not? Why are these new authors more interested in style where it becomes the writing itself that they are writing for, not writing about something?

One of the first courses that he took in this area was entitled "The Poet and Painter in American Modernism." Thrilled by the insights the course provided him, he explained:

> A very high-powered class, very challenging. It examined the real connections, primarily in the early part of the century, between the break in form that a lot of poets were taking--like Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams. Those two primarily. The strongest example and the links with steps being taken, changing and manipulating the form in both sculpture and painting. It influences me because, up to that time, I had been very interested in art but I didn't really have the tools to see what modern art was doing. The reason I came to understand what . . . modern art was doing was because I learned about poetry. . . . A phrase that I really never understood until that class was over was "The medium is the message." Art becomes extremely esoteric at that point because they're not worrying about social impact. It becomes the manipulation of the medium, whether with paint or words, and how they bounce off one another. . . . It opened my thought processes, sort of heightened your social consciousness to a different way of thinking.

In another class, George had the opportunity to combine his interest in writing with his interest in the style of these authors:

> [This course], "Post Modernism," was important mainly because of the paper I wrote. I wrote what I know is the best paper I have ever written on a book called *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* by Milan Kundera. . . . I wrote a paper that mirrored the style--a flip-flop between essay and narrative. They bounced off of one another. That had a real impact on the way you could read the story. I wrote a paper along the same style in which I wrote a lot of essay and then I wrote my own fiction.

George's passion for good literature--either as a reader or a writer--was matched by a passionate commitment to his religion. A fundamentalist, experiences in and out of Pine University that provided him the opportunity to tie his Christian values and ideals to his academic interests were especially important to George. One such experience involved reading Dostoyevsky's *The Underground Man*, a novel that he found "had a lot of ties with my Christian background and it hit me on a literary and moral, and psychological level." A manuscript study sponsored by the University's Christian fellowship afforded a similar opportunity:

> You are given one hour to study approximately a page and a half of the Book of Mark in which we are looking for repeated words, repeated phrases, just trying to figure out what is going on in the text. Just a very microscopic level, word to word analysis. . . . It was just real influential because it focused and gave real textual, local support for my Christian beliefs. It also gave me a real owning of the Book of Mark. Being able to say what was in there was a real powerful tool for a lot of reasons--in terms, for instance, of thinking about my own faith. But also thinking about how I perceived the world around me, including the books I read.

Thus, George's academic interests were not bounded by the walls of universities or the covers of books. Indications of his outside interests and values--in sports, in religion, in photography--frequently found their way into his comments about literature and writing. School subjects, as they are traditionally perceived, did not mean much to George for he did not consider them a valid representation of the organization of knowledge in the world:

> What you learn in school is limited in that life doesn't fall into neat categories of history, science, and English. Rather, they are all a mix. If you can learn things that cross the boundaries of the subject matters, you've learning things that will apply more directly to what you will be doing for the next 50 years of your life. After you are out of school.

Taken together, George's undergraduate experiences provided him with a rich background in the field of literature and writing. He read literature of different time periods and authors, of different cultures and genres. He wrote a variety of papers, including thematic and character analyses, as well as his own fiction. He loved writing and dreamed of, one day, writing his own novel.

While an undergraduate, George toyed with several career choices. For a short period of time, he thought of pursuing a career in professional baseball. With one brother in the major leagues and some pressure from his father, it was a serious consideration until he found his participation on a University's varsity team "unfun."

By the time he was a senior, George had narrowed his choices to two: the ministry and teaching. He applied to a well known seminary in St. Louis and to the fifth-year teacher education program at Pine University. Accepted in both programs, he spent considerable time mulling over his options. Taking the advice of one professor who suggested he needed to get "knocked around by the world a little" before entering the ministry, George opted to enter the teacher education program. When I asked him why he chose teaching, he said:

> There were two primary reasons. One of which is that I thought it was one of my gifts. I thought that I would be good at it. Two, you have to remember that last year it was the choice between seminary and [this teacher education program]. Teaching was an important emphasis in either choice. That was one of the reasons I chose teaching--it could never hurt me to have training as a teacher, no matter when and if I want to be a minister. The second was more social, some sort of social justice and impact questions. Where I thought I could do important work. I could be a novelist but I wouldn't have the same impact. I like Faulkner, but he didn't change my life.

George enrolled in the Pine University program in June of 1984, two weeks after he received his bachelor's degree, an intellectually demanding and theoretically oriented program. George was required to teach two classes of high school English during the academic year, simultaneously taking courses in English curriculum and instruction, adolescence, and educational foundations. George also took several electives in the English department to enrich his knowledge of the subject matter.

George's teaching assignment was a paid internship at St. Francis, a parochial boys' school located about 12 miles from the University. During the 1984-85 year, George taught

two classes there, senior electives in composition and creative writing. He also helped coach the baseball team in the spring. In the Spring of 1985, he was offered and accepted a full-time job teaching freshman and sophomore English in the same school. My interviews with and observations of George took place from January of 1985 (midway through his teacher education program) through June of 1986 (the conclusion of this first year of full-time teaching).

Learning to Teach: Defining His Goals

George drew heavily on his experiences--both in high school and in college--as a source for thinking about his goals as a teacher. Thinking about "outstanding instructors" he had at college, George identified three common characteristics of good instructors:

> One, genuine and obvious enthusiasm for teaching and the subject matter. Two, obvious understanding of the broadest issues of the subject matter. And three, coherent, cohesive lectures.

While subject matter was the linchpin in his evaluation of university teaching, there was a lack of content concerns in his evaluation of high school teachers:

> One of the things that I have tried to do is think back to when I got out of high school. The things that come first to mind, and it does impact the way I teach, is that I can't remember subject matter at all. I can remember some of the books we read but not what we did with them. People is what I remember.

Despite his deep and personal commitment to writing and the study of literature, George developed a philosophy of teaching that encompassed more than the transmission of subject matter. He explained:

> My goals as a teacher would be to have a class that students feel comfortable in but take seriously; to be a teacher that students respect intellectually and personally; to be a teacher and not a subject matter expert, someone who thinks about how students are going to gain and retain and organize concepts and not just a conveyor of information; a teacher who applies those principles to what is done in class; and to be a teacher who is always looking for something new, who is not satisfied with staying the same.

Thus, integrity, knowledgeability, flexibility, and the desire to continue learning were all important characteristics of George's ideal teacher. Another central issue for him was that of his role as a model for students. At one point he wrote in his journal:

> How much does my enthusiasm for the subject matter count? Or does my enthusiasm for life, in general, count more? I guess I'm asking what kind of impact teachers have on students. Some of my best teachers I remember more for the people--genuine, concerned, much integrity--that they were than for the subject matter I learned in their class.

For George, then, his goals as a teacher were multiple, including a concern for the intellectual, emotional, and moral development of his students. And his own experiences as a student--in high school, as an undergraduate, and as a graduate student--were powerful influences on the development of those goals. However, the ways in which George conducted himself as a teacher--in the choices he made about what to teach and how to teach it--were also influenced by the messages he took away from his teacher education program. Two areas in which George felt his teacher education program played the biggest role were the ways in which he thought about teaching writing and reading.

Learning to Teach: Writing

The teaching of writing is a central aspect of the high school English curriculum and during his internship, George spent a great deal of time learning to teach writing. In his teacher education program, he was encouraged to think about writing as a process, as is reflected in George's comments about his summer curriculum and instruction class:

> I can't recall the details but I was continually having my thought processes changed, my consciousness raised about issues. The main one I can remember from the summer was just the breaking down of writing into a four stage process. In terms of working on generation of prewriting, and then drafting, and then revising and then the fourth stage would be editing. That was sort of an articulation of something that I had understood myself as a writer for a long time but to have it put out, diagrammed, was very helpful. That was a structure that I could hang my ideas on. And, in turn, he taught us how to use that. We went back to a piece of student writing that we had seen earlier. . . . It was really important in terms of my thinking of how the teaching of writing goes in stages and how each stage requires its own kind of evaluation. Or, at least, response. I shouldn't say evaluation.

For George, the things he learned about teaching writing meshed well with intuitions he had developed as he learned to write. The curriculum and instruction professor, however, brought those intuitions to the surface and provided George with a language for discussing writing with teachers and with students. Additionally, the professor helped George see that decisions about how best to teach (or evaluate) depended on the purpose and content of the instruction. George believed that this conceptualization of writing and the teaching of writing was the single most important thing he learned in his teacher education program:

> The primary way that the curriculum courses have influenced me is just teaching writing as a process. The two classes I am teaching are both writing classes, one composition, one creative writing. And I do *not* collect anything that I know has not had a complete rough draft and then hasn't been evaluated, either responded to by me or by other students. In other words, they're not just copying the rough draft over. I know what it has gone through. I also put a lot of emphasis on prewriting activities. Before they even get a rough draft down, I have them write about a lot of different topics that are related and ideas that are related so that when it comes time to put a draft down and sit and think and look at a blank page, there are points that their mind can cover again. They can go back through their journals.

Acknowledging the importance of teaching writing as a process instead of placing undue emphasis on products, George expressed equal concern with making writing activities and exercises relevant to his students. In designing such exercises, George tried to "personalize" them. Again, this was a disposition that was advocated and emphasized in his program. And George's experiences as a novice teacher served to reaffirm this emphasis, as is illustrated in his recollection of an experience that he had with one of his seniors:

> I had a kid last semester who wrote three stories about a guy who was a senior in high school and wasn't playing football for the first time in his high school career and who was having problems with his father. The writing the kid was doing in my class was obviously cathartic. I began to realize that a class like creative writing could be very important for a student to be able to talk about things she or he normally would not or normally could not. This is, I think, a perfectly legitimate reason for much of what a student may write and should be encouraged. I am finding more and more that the key to having students perform successfully in writing class is to have them write about things that they care about. If the student cares about what she or he is putting down, he or she will take the time necessary to make sure that things are expressed clearly and correctly.

But as a student of literary criticism and analysis, George was not content to let his students only write "expressively"; he also wanted students to develop the ability to write "more objective" prose. In his senior composition class, he developed a plan whereby students began the semester with expressive writing assignments, gradually moving to exercises that required they write about topics that were more external to them:

> It's sort of a progression. The overall scheme starts with expressive writing which is closest to the students' experiences, feelings and opinions. . . . Gradually I try to get them to be more and more analytical and critical. . . . So at the end we're really doing analysis. It's a spectrum. We are writing about things that are further and further from the student, that aren't totally subjective. Hopefully, we end up analyzing a subject that is completely exterior.

But developing this framework for teaching writing, George combined his growing concern for helping students write in ways that were more meaningful to them with his commitment to prepare them for college by teaching them to write in a "critical, objective style."

Learning to Teach: Literature

During his internship year, George taught short stories in his writing classes as a vehicle for discussions about what constitutes good composition and creative writing. Thinking about teaching literature, George was concerned about how he could accommodate multiple interpretations of text.

George thought about multiple interpretations of texts in two ways. First, he had learned as an undergraduate that the use of different analytical frameworks resulted in different perspectives and interpretations of the same piece of literature. Second, his

curriculum instructors emphasized the value of multiple interpretations of the same [piece of] literature, especially *personally relevant* interpretations of students. Reading Louise Rosenblatt's book, *Literature of Exploration*, George found himself agreeing with the author and his instructors that, because students apply what they read to their personal experiences, they "are probably getting something different from the piece than we are." On one journal entry he responded to his own question, How do we "teach" a book?

> Is it just reading, discussing, writing? How are we sure that we use and explore student personal reaction to the book? What is legitimate interpretation in terms of student response? Rosenblatt still sticks in my mind. Working from personal interpretation to a more "objective" critical position through discussion, prereading, prewriting stuff.

George believes that a teacher should start with the personal and move slowly toward the more objective, the analytic. George conceptualized the difference between these two perspectives as a chasm, a "gap" that teachers needed to bridge.

> We have to try and close that gap. Or at least try to understand what [the students] are getting out of [the book]. We can let them get that out of it *plus* what we want them to get out of it. Either that or to be able to change . . . trying to let the students go with their interpretation more than dictate mine . . . it is at the foundation of how I teach.

When George decided to teach "Greenleaf," a short story by Flannery O'Connor to his students, this "gap" became very real:

> I noticed when I taught the story--I taught it slowly because it's a fairly tough story--that only at the very end did I feel that they were clueing in on how important motivations were. It's real key. The whole story hinges on two characters' motivations. The students were not reading it on that level at all and I understand the story almost exclusively on that level. So they were not understanding the flow of the story in terms of the causation of events. It was sort of a sequence of more or less unconnected events for them. Whereas, if you knew the motivations of the characters, the events were not unconnected at all. You knew exactly why what went on went on. So there was a difference, a gap there. . . . Their interpretation wasn't necessarily off, it just wasn't complete because they hadn't considered this important element. So I had them do character analyses where they had to look specifically at the passages about the characters. Then they could understand the character better. By the end, they understood the story better because these exercises helped. . . . I tried to close the gap by helping them discover those facts.

George's reflections suggest that the instructors in his teacher education program influenced George's conception of the teaching of literature as much as they had influenced the ways that he thought about teaching writing. During his internship year, his considerations focused on making literature relevant to the lives of his students. When George moved on to teaching freshman and sophomore English, however, he taught novels for the first time. And he began to voice a new concern, one that involved the development

of reading skills that his students would need to help them interact with the material and generate interpretations. Without the resources of his teacher education program--in particular, curriculum classes and supervisor observations--George drew upon his own learning experiences as a source for pedagogical strategies.

As I noted earlier, George had extensive experience as an undergraduate doing intensive analyses, reading and re-reading texts closely, tracing themes and characters. Noting important passages, George would sometimes reread one book 10 or 15 times before he really felt he "owned" it. Asked how he analyzed texts, he reported:

> Reading and re-reading. I think that was easily the thing that was most influential on my writing of papers, re-reading. If it was a story, I would reread it 20 times. If it was a novel, probably 2 or 3, for a *big* paper. Then, as I'd reread it, I would find problems. Then I would have to go back and reread in order to solve those problems. By the end, I had more or less figured out the book.

When it came time to teach novels, George tried to mold his students in his own image:

> The summer was my first experience with teaching novels which was important because I didn't know how to do that. I didn't know what that was about. I ended up talking about specific passages that I thought were important and I had them do a quote journal where I had them pull out the most important quote in each chapter, had them write it down and tell me why it was important. . . . I read with an eye toward important passages. If a page is just useless information, then I just gloss over it. But if I can see it is important, then I read it very carefully. I feel that that's a reading skill that good readers always use and I'm hoping that I get at that thinking process.

But reading for "important" passages requires that there is a focus that can be used to judge a passage's significance. Often, George used the development of specific themes as that focus, reading and re-reading books with an eye toward a particular theme that was being elaborated upon by the author. George conceived of themes as "handles" that he could give students when they read fiction. When he talked of the things that he learned in his teaching, he frequently referred to the themes he began noticing as he read various short stories and novels with his students. For example, although he knew the story before he taught it to his freshmen, George explained that his knowledge of *Of Mice and Men* was enriched as a result of teaching it:

> I guess there were a couple of issues that I hadn't considered, a couple of themes that are explored in the novel that I hadn't considered before. One major one that I can think of now is dreams--having a dream and trying to follow it. The reality and unreality of trying to follow that dream, which happened a lot in that setting of westward expansion and early California when people thought they were going to make big killings on various things. Thought they were going to get their own land, although it never panned out. But they chased the dream all of their lives.

These newfound insights came from a variety of sources:

> I gain those perspectives by reviewing the novel itself. I form opinions and interpretations in the first reading. I'll put it down to prepare for class and another idea comes into my head. Maybe because of something that I read the day before, maybe because of a conversation that I had the night before. Some other angle pops into my head when I look at that material again or I make another connection that I hadn't seen before. Or a kid says something in class that I hadn't thought of. "Okay, wow, that opens a whole new way of looking at it!" I think all those sort of contribute to my thinking. The more experience you have with a book, to a point, the better your perspective.

So learning to teach literature meant not only learning pedagogical techniques, it also meant learning more about the content and the nature of the literature being taught. The experience of teaching also made George aware of the fact that he began looking at literature in new ways. At one point he said, "now I read stories in a different light. I think about them in terms of how easy the themes are to trace."

Teaching Theme

Themes, then, became important to George for two reasons. First, they were vehicles for helping students explore literature. But George also saw themes as vehicles for helping students learn to write: By examining the ways in which other authors used and developed themes in their stories, he hoped that students would develop an appreciation for how they might want to use themes in their own stories. But teaching his students about themes was not an easy task for George.

In the spring of his student teaching year, George decided to teach his students how to trace a theme in a short story. He had taught a similar unit in the fall on thematic and character analysis, but it had not been a very successful unit. He attributed the failure to the fact that dealing with thematic and character analysis in the same unit is too much for students to understand and cope with. He also believed that he had assumed too much about what the students would know. Asked why the first attempt at teaching thematic analysis failed, he said: "I assumed the first time that everybody knew what theme was but it became clear that nobody did because I had to provide examples for them."

Rethinking his approach to thematic analysis, George decided to have his students do a free-writing exercise in which they answered the question, "In fiction or in short stories, what is theme?" He hoped that this activity would provide him with a sense of what the students already knew about theme, as well as any misconceptions they had developed. Then he planned to present them with the short story "The Enormous Radio," doing an in-class thematic analysis. After this short modeling exercise, he planned to use a piece of music composed by Beethoven in which the same musical phrase is repeated over and over. "It's just an example of what counterpoint is in music. How [the musical phrase] is repeated by different instruments, echoed, changed a little bit. You introduce this theme and then you play upon it." Finally, George planned to have the students read a few more short stories and write papers analyzing a theme in one of them.

George's choice of Beethoven as a mechanism by which to illustrate a point about literature may seem surprising to the newcomer. But it was not an uncommon event. In talking about his teaching, and about English, George frequently drew analogies, both within the domain of literature as well as to other areas of study. I observed him using metaphors,

analogies, and similes frequently, both in his classroom explanations and in our interviews. "Interdisciplinary analogies," as he called them, were his favorite, instances when he could make connections between different fields of study. Sometimes this meant bringing reproductions of art work to class. At other times, George played music for his students. Still, at other times, he would refer to concepts that students were learning in other classes to explain related concepts in literature and writing.

Making connections between fields was important to George. He valued bridging the disciplinary chasms because he could "see comparisons across disciplines, maybe start to discover some principles that apply outside of specific systems." He wanted to be "cross-disciplinary" in his "understanding of the world around me" and he jumped at the chance to learn more about fields that enrich the "web" of meaning that he constructed of his world. In turn, he tried to enrich the webs in the minds of his students. His comments in his journal about his plans to teach suggest how varied the different components of George's "web" for "theme" were:

> A theme is an idea or thought that a story explores or treats. A single story may explore or treat several themes to varying degrees of depth. To be able to trace a theme in a story is to be able to recognize it at different parts of a story and to be able to compare what is said about that theme in each appearance. How is it different in each different circumstance? How is it similar?
>
> After a theme is introduced, it is the repetition and variation on theme later on that gives it meaning. A composer does the same thing with theme in music and with the use of counterpoints. I'm thinking of stories now where counterpoint might be visible. The Bible has many: Jacob deceives his father Isaac . . . into giving him Esau's birthright. Later, on the night Jacob is to wed Rachel, Rachel's father puts Leah into the tent in the dark. Jacob has been fooled by the same means he fooled others. And here two themes emerge: blindness and deception.
>
> I'm trying to think of an everyday example of this so as to "get into it" with the students. What things are repeated in your life but are never the same each time? Seasons, school, sunrises, meals, etc. Or what is something which had assumed a pattern suddenly changed?"
>
> For example: A baseball game has a pattern that we can anticipate--9, 3-out innings. However, it is how that pattern is varied in each of its nine repetitions that gives a game meaning, that tells who wins or loses. We know that a school year has a planned pattern that gives the school year meaning for you and for me. What is in those semesters, those quarters. . . .
>
> So a theme is a thought or idea that gets special treatment in a story. The treatment is special because the story gives the idea a specific place and circumstance to exist and the story examines that idea in the light of that place and those circumstances. In a sense, a story forces us to look at an old thing (theme, idea) in a new way. It prompts thought and exploration. . . .
>
> I guess I'm trying to reveal to students how to read a story through a certain lens. To see that a theme is one thing a story treats, and if you re-read a story looking for that thing, that theme, you see it differently, and you see what a story is saying about a certain thing, and not necessarily what a story as a whole is "saying." (It is always debatable if stories *ever* do that.)

The conclusion George reaches at the end of his journal entry, the idea that theme is a lens through which the reader digests the story, is one that he discussed further in a planning interview:

> Actually, in a lot of ways, from a critical perspective, a theme is a lens through which you see a story. If you decide that there's this theme, you read through that theme. You read [the story] in expectation that things refer to that theme.

When he presented the concept of theme to his students, George started the first lesson with an exercise in which he gave his students a parable from the Bible, analyzed the theme for them, and had a class discussion about the process he had engaged in. But George did not believe that modelling the process was the best way to "hook" his students so he presented the analogy of the baseball game and its innings that he discussed in his journal. Unfortunately, the students did not respond well to the analogy. Reflecting on the lesson, George recalls:

> What frustrated me with the lesson from Tuesday was the inability on my own part to connect the repetition and pattern of a theme and the image I tried to use of the innings in a baseball game. I was trying to show that themes are general ideas that take on new meanings when placed in specific character and setting circumstances of a story. In other words, treating a theme in a story is looking at something old in a new way. Just like we know that a baseball game has nine innings and 27 outs, we know how we see a theme as it appears generically--whether it be honesty, jealousy, loneliness, or whatever. What gives the game and the time meaning, however, is how it is worked out in the game itself, the story itself. Anyway, my frustrations led me to look for a better image, a better metaphor that I could give the guys for tracing and understanding a theme. What I came up with was the trailing of a wounded animal by a hunter. Here the hunter disregards all or most of the information the scene before him represents and concentrates only on that which pertains to the animal he is searching for. Now, some of the clues might be from the animal itself--blood or hair--just as the word or words of a theme might appear outright in any given passage. But also a hunter must see the broken grass, the hoofprint, the signs that are the indicators. A story can deal with a theme indirectly also, by association, juxtaposition, and other evidence. So we read a story through again, looking for that theme, searching for that game. This is the kind of reading that opens a story up because, if the theme being traced is a major one, close reading makes one realize the interconnectedness of the whole story.

In his attempts to teach "theme," George failed to separate two very different issues. He wanted his students to understand the concept, to be able to answer the question, "In fiction, what is a theme?" But he also wanted them to be able to *trace* a theme. He searched for analogies and metaphors, using examples in the students' lives that would give them "structures to hang these ideas on." But his analogies were confusing: In class he interchanged explanations of theme with thematic analysis, leaving it to the students to distinguish between the concept and the skill. The metaphor of the hunter trailing an

animal, for example, is an interesting way of talking about thematic analysis; the reader must pick up clues in the text to understand fully the ways in which an author is developing a theme. However, this analogy is not a definition of "theme," George's original purpose. The students were left wondering what the topic of discussion really was.

George also had his students read through the short stories in the unit, *The Enormous Radio* and *The Life You Save May Be Your Own*, several times, reading for different themes. This aspect of the unit resembled George's own undergraduate experience where a professor would discuss the relevance of a particular theme and the students would have to find evidence for that theme in the story.

While the unit, on the whole, was confusing for his students, there were a few clearings in an otherwise foggy presentation. One day George played Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, a piece of music many of the students were already acquainted with. They had all heard

> the basic "da-da-da-dum!" musical theme that Beethoven introduces right from the start. The repetition and counterpoint are quite clear. Also, early on [there] is a pastoral part of the piece where the theme is not recognizable, so they got the idea that the theme appears more clearly and concisely at some points than at others.

Observing the class, it appeared to me that his students responded well to this part of the lesson; the conversation was lively and comments by several students suggested that they recognized how the same piece of music could manifest itself in different ways.

The victory was brief; George was very disappointed with the quality of the students' papers that closed the unit. He felt he failed. But how is it that George, a skilled, experienced writer of critical literary analysis and a concerned, enthusiastic educator, had so much difficulty teaching his students how to identify and trace themes in short stories?

Analyzing the Case

After my students have read this case, I ask them to answer the following questions:

List and describe the alternative representations of theme that George generated for his teaching.

Analyze each representation. Describe what you believe George wanted students to learn from each representation. What are the individual strengths and weaknesses of the representations that George generated?

Why do you think that George had so much difficulty teaching his students about theme?

Why do you think that George's students did not learn about theme by the end of the unit?

How did George's experiences as a student influence his teaching of theme?

How did George's knowledge of the subject matter--of themes and thematic analysis--influence how he taught his students about theme?

Do you think that George understood what a theme was?

There is no question that George knew a great deal about the concept of theme and the process of doing a thematic analysis. But teaching this unit to his class meant that George had to, for the first time in his life, make public his private, clearly tacit understanding of the subject matter. His experiences teaching "theme" demanded that George explicate his knowledge. It was difficult; no teacher had ever defined what a theme was or the steps involved in doing a thematic analysis. He told me:

> I had never been given a definition of theme or had seen a professor trace a theme to any great extent. In some ways, in lectures you do. You trace a symbol or you trace what a character does and, sometimes, a specific theme. But in terms of having one defined or having a theme followed through a story, I never saw that done. But I had done that in my own papers.

It is interesting to note that George did not simply teach theme "the way he was taught." By his account, his tacit understanding of theme had been developed through a kind of intellectual osmosis--professors had made reference to themes in lectures, George had been required to do thematic analyses for course papers, and he had noticed a number of themes in his reading of literature.

However, when George chose to *teach* theme, he started with a free write about the definition of a theme, then moved on to trying to provide students with a definition of theme, both through analogies such as counterpoint and baseball games, but also through modelling thematic analyses in class. Finally, he had students do their own thematic analysis. He did not leave it up to the students to find a way to understand theme through the process of osmosis that he had experienced; he tried to facilitate the development of an understanding in a more direct way, an admirable goal despite his lack of success. One can trace this decision to the heavy emphasis that George's teacher education program put on such activities and concerns.

But what George's teacher education program had never done was teach him what theme was, nor about the match or mismatch between different instructional representations of theme and its meaning to literary critics. In my discussions of this case with students, I try to point these issues out and get them to explore the complex relationship between subject matter knowledge and subject matter knowledge for teaching. Much like the literature that George teaches his students, however, there is no *one* right interpretation of this case, no single point to be made about pedagogical content knowledge, subject matter knowledge, or pedagogical reasoning. Rather, there are many themes embedded in the

story, and the one I choose to pursue with each class depends as much on what my students see in the case, as what the focus of our discussions has been prior to the introduction of this case.

Lessons About Cases

I'll close this paper with one final story that illustrates this point, as well as raises a set of issues I have not--nor will--address at this moment. I mentioned earlier that I began developing this case when I was working with Vicki LaBoskey on a project in which we were teaching preservice teachers to write cases. I used excerpts of my case of George to demonstrate what a case might look like, how one uses data to support claims, how one searches for meaning in the behavior and talk of teachers and students.

The student teachers in the program hated George. They didn't simply hate the activity of examining the case, or reading the data, they despised George. One student, Joseph, was particularly adamant. A published author himself, he explained to me that George should not have been allowed in a classroom. He didn't care about students, he didn't know his subject matter, he didn't know anything about teaching.

I was heartbroken. Not only did the students appear to miss the point of the case--that there are fundamental differences between knowing the subject matter and knowing how to teach the subject matter--but they also disliked George, a man who I had come to admire, respect, and care about. With tail between my legs, I retreated, eventually regrouping and finding other ways to discuss with students how to write a case.

But my story doesn't end there. Several months later, after the George-haters had been teaching for several months in their own classrooms, Joseph's supervisor approached me in the hallway, smiling. She had just returned from observing Joseph teach. And what should the subject matter of the lesson be but themes and thematic analysis. Poor Joseph, he had failed miserably at his attempts to communicate his notions of theme to his students. Seeing that he was frustrated and unnerved afterwards, Joseph's supervisor tried to help him figure out why the lesson had failed. Suddenly he looked at her, eyes widening. Slapping his forehead, he exclaimed, "Oh my god! I'm George!" Subsequently, they went on to discuss the differences between knowing something personally and being able to develop that understanding in students, using George as an example, as shared knowledge and experience.

Revenge is sweet, and I thanked the supervisor for sharing that experience with me. I felt vindicated. But it's not the vindication that's important here, it's the host of lessons I took from that experience. Cases are fruitful ways of talking with practicing and prospective teachers about teaching. Joseph and his supervisor were able to use George and the case of his teaching theme to make sense of Joseph's own experience. The case provided them with a way of framing the problem Joseph encountered, as well as a way of analyzing it.

But we can't expect too much from our cases. Joseph wasn't ready to see what I wanted him to see in the case of George until after he had wrestled with some of the same issues. Thus, my case did not work as a *substitute* for the field experiences, a story of instruction that allowed prospective teachers to discuss an important issue without going into the field. Rather, my case of George acted as an *enhancer* of experience, helping Joseph and his supervisor critically reflect on Joseph's personal experience.

When I developed this case I focused on the question: What will my students learn from this case? But it's equally important, when thinking about the use of cases to consider the question of when students will learn from our cases. The answer is simple: They'll learn when they're ready and what they learn depends on what they are able to see. As we begin to think about the use of cases in teacher education, we must also pursue these related issues, reflecting not only on the methods we use to teach cases and the cases we choose the develop, but on issues of when to introduce cases, how and when to revisit cases and explore new issues with students or old issues in a new light, and how to insure that *when* they are able to learn, there will be someone--like Joseph's supervisor--there to help them.

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